Analogy versus Metaphor

Aldo van Eyck's Poetic Images In-Between Fields

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Analogy versus metaphor, Aldo van Eyck's poetic images *in-between* fields.

The use of metaphors in Post-War architecture.

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Introduction. From scientific analogies to poetic metaphors.

The importance of written discourse in the development of modern architecture has been emphasised time and again by architectural scholars, particularly when put together with the role of mass media and the use of drawings and photographs. For instance, Beatriz Colomina, in her book *Privacy and Publicity, Modern Architecture and Mass Media[1]*, points out that modern buildings were not really known by architects around the world through direct experience (travels or visits) but as constellations of images and texts printed in journal publications and monographic books. In her book, Colomina has proven the essential role of written discourse (what architects said about their buildings, more than their buildings themselves) in the development of modern architecture. Thus, modern architecture, as well as a new *style* of building defined by Nikolaus Pevsner, Emil Kaufmann, Sigfried Giesion, or Henry-Russell Hitchcock [2], was also a new way of talking about architecture that could be recognized by a distinctive vocabulary, as Adrian Forty has beautifully explored in *Words and Buildings[3]*. The words used by modern architects (form, function, space, design, order, structure, flexibility, etc.) existed in a very delicate relationship to one another. To give some examples, Louis Sullivan coined the phrase "form follows function" in an article titled "The Tall Office Building Artistically" (Getty Research Institute, 1896), connecting *form* and *function* in a very specific way that was used by modern architects as an argument against decorative elements (*function-less* elements); and Louis Kahn wrote that "design is form-making in order"[4], showing that the words were frequently defined through each other. The vocabulary used by modern architects suggests that modernist discourse was indeed a system.

On the other hand, according to Forty[5], the use of this specific vocabulary was corresponded with a general purge of metaphors derived from literary and art criticism. The dismissal of metaphors such as "bold", "noble", "strength", "masculine", etc., needs to be situated within a general modernist attempt to render what is concrete abstract, a historical shift toward the belief that some metaphors did not provide a basis for scientific inquiry, which came together with an almost blind trust in technology. As a matter of fact, the debates within the early International Congresses of Modern Architecture (CIAM) in Frankfurt am Main (1929), Brussels (1930), and Athens (1933) focused on the *Minimum Dwelling, Rational Land Development* and *The Functional City*, in search for an *objective* architecture. Maxims such as "A house is a machine for living in", delivered by Le Corbusier in *Vers une Architecture* (1923), prove that modern architects and critics favored metaphors drawn from science and technology (e.g. "circulation" instead of "human movement"), while Mies van der Rohe's remark "Build – don't talk"[6] show that poetic language fell under suspicion. Nonetheless, early modern architects and critics still drew upon pre-existing categories and vocabularies to describe what others should see in their work, and language was still used to do something images and drawings were not able to provide on their own, but the few metaphors that were encouraged had to seek *clarity,* to avoid many-to-one mappings and metonymies, getting away from the most rich, complex

[1] Colomina, Beatriz. *Privacy and Publicity, Modern Architecture and Mass Media*. MIT Press, 1996.

[2] According to Panayotis Tournikiotis, in *The Historiography of Modern Architecture* (2001), these four were the first historians that dealt with modern architecture as a new style of building historically situated, even if Pevsner (*Pioneers of the Modern Movement* [Faber, 1936]), Kaufmann (*Von Ledoux bis Le Corbusier. Ursprung und Entwicklung der Autonomen Architektur* [Passer, 1933]), Giedion (*Space, Time and Architecture: The Growth of a New Tradition* [Harvard University Press, 1941]), and Hitchcock (*The International Style: Architecture since 1922* [W. W. Norton & Company, 1932]) did not agree about its qualities and chronology. The 1932 MoMA exhibition by Hithcock and Johnson (*The International Style*) popularized modern architecture as a style with formal qualities such as white walls, long windows, pilotis, etc.

[3] Forty, Adrian. *Words and Buildings*. New York: Thames and Hudson Inc., 2000.

[4] Kahn, Louis. "Order and form" in *Perspecta*, vol. 3, 1955, pp. 46-63.

[5] Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings*.

[6] Bonta, J. P, "Reading and Writing about Architecture" in *Design Book Review*, no. 18, 1990, pp. 13-16.

and inconsistent images. Hence, direct analogies like Le Corbusier's (house = machine) were preferred to more open-ended poetic images[7].

However, one of the aftermaths of the Second World War and its technologically-aided extermination was a rising feeling against a purely scientific and mechanistic (functional) world-view, a shift that, in the case of modern architecture, can be followed within the minutes of the various postwar meetings of CIAM and Team 10[8]. Signs of Team 10's avowed death of CIAM were the rejection of a generic (universalist approach) in favour of a more a concrete (human) perspective, a focus on identity and belongingness, the development of a contextual approach, or the use of texts and references from the social sciences (specially anthropology and sociology). Of course, the rejection of the one-sided mechanistic approach had a profound impact in the architectural use of language, being that language helps architects with everything that they find difficult or choose not to be precise about. Forty explains that "language permits signification, it encourages one thing to be 'seen as' another, it stimulates the sense of potential ambiguity that lies at the basis of meaning"[9]. After the WWII, in light of late CIAM debates, the early modernist demands for a plain and scientific language seemed out of place, and a return to the most poetic metaphors was bound to happen. This shift is evident in the late works by Le Corbusier (Ronchamp 1955, Tourette 1956, Chandigarh 1966, etc.), but a better[10] example of the renewed post-war interest in poetic expression is the use of the metaphors by one of the most prolific architect-writers of the fifties and sixties: the Dutch architect Aldo van Eyck (1918-1999), who was one of the founding members of the group known as Team 10. Van Eyck's writings are full of poetic images, drenched in literary, art and philosophic references, and show the wide range of linguistic strategies that were used as an instrument to develop a more human view of architecture during the post-war era.

Metaphors in Aldo van Eyck's writings

Aldo van Eyck's writings[11] were compiled by Francis Strauven and Vincent Ligtelijn in 2008, yet this hardback edition lacks the visual richness of the original publications, an aspect which Van Eyck particularly cared for. In this collection of texts, written between 1947-1986, and from very different origins, ranging from journal articles and conference presentations to book chapters, the reader can find some introductory words for an art exhibition by the CoBrA painter Corneille, letters to his colleagues Alison and Peter Smithson, as well as essays such as "A Miracle of Moderation", a text studying the Dogon culture later published by Charles Jencks & George Baird in *Meaning in Architecture*[12]. One of the first things that any scholar looking into Team 10's history will discover is that Van Eyck's writings often stand out[13] for their evocative power and literary style, their mixture of prose and free verse and his peculiar use of the English language. We should keep in mind that Van Eyck's father, Pieter Nicolaas van Eyck, was a famous Dutch poet, critic and essayist who made sure that literature, especially poetry, played an important role in Aldo van Eyck's education. In *Aldo van Eyck, the Shape of Relativity*, Francis Strauven recalls how, by the time he was sixteen, poetry had become Aldo's foremost interest, and he even nurtured a plan to devote his professional career to language and literature[14]. Van Eyck read virtually every piece of English poetry to be found in his father's library, from Beowulf to T.S. Eliot, from Donne, Milton, Vaughan and Wordsworth to Dylan Thomas, Baudelaire, Yeats or Ezra Pound. Guido Hallema even suggested[15] to think of Van Eyck's later work as an architectural interpretation of the concepts that he previously handled mainly in poetry, such as rhythm, the 'breathing' of verse and the 'in-between'. Hence, it is not surprising that Van Eyck's own architectural writings are also full of literary devices such as metaphors, and that he never allowed any of his texts to be translated into a language that he could not read[16]. Peter D. E. Clarke explains that when a translation was required, Van Eyck did not sit down with the original text and dictionary to mechanically

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[7] Actually, Le Corbusier used many open-ended metaphors and his work is full of poetic resonances, but the architects of the time took the machine-house analogy seriously, as we can see e.g. in Alexander Klein's *Functional House for Frictionless Living* (1927).
[8] The founding and history of Team 10 out of CIAM can be followed in: Risselada, Max, and Dirk van den Heuvel. *Team 10: In Search of a Utopia of the Present 1953-1981*. Netherlands: NAI Publishers, 2006. Pedret, Annie. "CIAM and the emergence of Team 10 thinking, 1945-1959". Doctoral dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2001.
[9] Adrian Forty, *Words and Buildings*, 38.
[10] Better in the sense that Van Eyck's work captures the new sensitivity of the younger post-war generation.
[11] Van Eyck, Aldo. *Collected articles and other writings 1947-1998*. Edited Vincent Ligtelijn and Francis Strauven. Amsterdam: Sun Publishers, 2008.
[12] Jencks, Charles and George Baird. *Meaning in Architecture*. Barrie & Jenkins, 1970.
[13] Especially when reading collective books such as *Team 10 Primer*, edited by Alison Smithson, with texts by every core member of Team 10: Smithson, Alison. *Team 10 Primer 1953-62*. United States: The MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 1963.
[14] Strauven, Francis. *Aldo van Eyck: The Shape of Relativity*. Amsterdam: Architectura & Natura Press, 1998, pp. 41-42.
[15] Francis Strauven, *Aldo van Eyck: The Shape of Relativity*, 61.
[16] Clarke, Peter. "The Writings of Aldo van Eyck: A Modernist Sensibility Introduced Into Architecture". PhD, University of Bristol, 1985, p. 6.

convert his writings, but instead rewrote the article in the required language. Thus, "the peculiarities of Van Eyck's English are mainly a consequence to his poetic approach to language, … he stretches the language and concentrates multiple metaphor and association into his own dense and playful poetic language, usually to great effect"[17].

The pages of *Collected Articles and Other Writings* contain phrases and lengthy quotations by famous poets and artists, and of course an extensive list of metaphors. For instance, in a famous statement written for the 'Door and Window' issue of the architectural magazine *Forum[18]* in August 1960, titled "Between here and there, now and later", Van Eyck opens with the verse "there is a garden in her face" by Thomas Campion[19]. Then he goes on to explain how the mind reaches between here and there, now and later, how in-between are the physical things and that the mind should be able to penetrate this matter, to reach "the other side", "a following moment". But "space went astray in the void", "space has no room and time not a moment for man", hence the architect would have to gather man into the meaning of space and time. He urges us to "provide that place", to "make a welcome of each door", a "face of each window", to build the counterform of the mind for each man and all man. He defends that "architects and urbanists have become true specialists in the art of organising the meagre[20]" and points out that "man still breathes both in and out", asking "when is going architecture to do the same. "Between here and there, now and later, lies the in-between realm, the home of the mind".

This short text alone is full of metaphors and other literary devices, a door is a *welcome*, a window as a *face*, the *in-between* as the *home of the mind*, architecture as something that should *breathe both in and out*. Complex as it may seem, the text is an attempt to capture the nature of *place* and *reality*, a phenomenological interpretation of architecture that we can only understand if we dive into Van Eyck's philosophical and poetical references. The architect's writings employ many more literary devices, some examples are the oxymoron *labyrinthian clarity*, or the *Oterloo Circles*, which can be interpreted as an intriguing and complex visual metaphor. It is also interesting to compare the texts in *Aldo van Eyck, Works[21]*, written by the architect to explain his designs, to the ones in *Collected Articles and Other Writings*. Contrary to his most theoretical essays, Van Eyck's descriptions of his own buildings were very concrete, overflowing with depictions of everyday activities and the most ordinary things, and packed with mentions of his friends and acquaintances. Georges Candilis, also a member of Team 10, often recalled the "tremendous architectural lesson" he learnt when Van Eyck took him round the Amsterdam Orphanage (1959), the most acclaimed building by the Dutch: "[He] did not talk like most architects; he did not say: see this finely finished detail, these room with its fine proportions; he showed me a hidden corner in a large room, saying 'see this? it's very important, the little boys can hide here to smoke a cigarette' … the way he talked about architecture was totally different from the norm … he had penetrated to the deeper meaning of architecture"[22]. Van Eyck's writings spiral around this "deeper meaning of architecture", the phenomenological nature of space, with the help of the most poetic and enigmatic images on the one hand and the most concrete and ordinary things on the other. They are an attempt to capture both the metaphysic nature and the physical qualities of place. This is equally true for one of his most famous poetic images, the House-City Tree-Leaf double metaphor, which synthesises his own understanding of urbanism and his avowed *Configurative Discipline*.

The Tree-Leaf Statement.

Aldo van Eyck wrote the famous Tree-Leaf Statement in 1961, as a visiting Professor at Washington University in St. Louis[23], and used it for the first time as part of Chapter 5 of *The Child, the City and the Artist*, a lengthy essay written in 1962 thanks to a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation. *The Child, the City and the Artist*, described by Van Eyck as an "essay on the in-between realm", was only published posthumously[24] in 2008, edited by Francis Strauven and Vincent Ligtelijn who report that, although publishers had shied

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17 Peter Clarke, "The Writings of Aldo van Eyck", p. 6.
18 Aldo van Eyck, "Between here and there, now and later" in *Collected articles and other writings*, 291-292. The following quotes are from this same text, and emphases are added by authors to mark out the literary devices (metonymy, metaphor, alliteration, repetition, etc.)
19 Campion, Thomas. "There is a garden in her face" in *The Third and Fourth Booke of Ayres*. London: Thomas Snodham, 1617.
20 He is referring here to the Athens Charter and the orthodox modernist urbanism.
21 Ligtelijn, Vincent, ed. *Aldo van Eyck: Works 1944-1999*. Switzerland: Birkhauser Verlag AG, 1999.
22 Vincent Ligtelijn (ed.), *Aldo van Eyck: Works*, p. 296.
23 Aldo van Eyck, *Collected articles and other writings*, 715.
24 The 2008 publication has some differences from the original typescript: the editors added some pictures (to the ones chosen by Aldo van Eyck) and omitted the last chapter, "The story of another idea". A *facsimile* publication of *The Child, the City and the Artist* is underway, and a Spanish translation of the book will be published at the end of 2021 by Arquia Foundation.

away from this unusual book when it was written, stating that it did not fit into their catalogues, the typescript was widely circulated in the USA, fed through the photocopiers in many universities[25]. The interest that this unpublished typescript aroused is reflected in the fact that in 1982, more than twenty years before *The Child, the City and the Artist* was finally published, Peter D. E. Clarke, a scholar from the University of Bristol, defended his doctoral dissertation on Van Eyck's writings, in which this essay plays a significant role. Although the major portion of the book, more than three quarters, never appeared in print form until the posthumous publication, Van Eyck did not really keep his essay unpublished, as he turned parts of it into articles which were published throughout the years on different occasions[26]. A thorough read of *Collected Articles and Other Writings* shows that Van Eyck normally came back to his writings to add or change parts, and even transformed the content when translating from Dutch to English and vice versa. This was also the case with the Tree-Leaf Statement [Fig. 1], which was published for the first time in the Labyrinth issue of *The Situationist Times* in October 1963, and then reworked and republished in the 1965 paperback edition of *Team 10 Primer* and *Domus* magazine, in its May 1965 issue, where it was finally transformed into the by now well-known handwritten diagram. [Fig. 2]

The complete Tree-Leaf Statement read as follows:

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Tree is leaf and leaf is tree
City is house and house is city.

Take any 'part 'and there is the 'whole'.
Take the 'whole 'and behold the 'part'.
Whole is part and part is whole (provided each is identified with what it needs in order to be house
or tree, city or leaf – moisture, air, sap, people and people's activities, emotions and
associations.

It is the multiple meaning within the image that matters in each case.
A tree is a tree because it is also a large leaf.
A leaf is a leaf because it is also a small tree.
A city is a city because it is also a large house.
A house is a house because it is also a small city.

Say tree, leaf, large leaf, small tree;
Say leaves or leaves on a tree;
Say a few leaves still or many leaves soon, Say leafless tree.

Say this tree when my child grows up and that tree when I was young.
Say one tree, lots of trees, all sorts of trees, trees in the forest.
Say forest (hear, lost, dark, owl's hoot, toadstool, squirrel, tiger, timber);
Say apple tree, apple orchard, apple pie;
Say NUTS! [27]
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Contrary to what it may seem, the purpose of this statement and diagram was not to establish an analogy between a city and a tree, but to confront the images that identify part and whole. Van Eyck is not comparing House to Leaf and City to Tree, but poetically linking Leaf to Tree (part to whole) to suggest a similar metaphoric connection between House and City. As Strauven points out, the twin images house-city and tree-leaf disclose a wealth of multiple meanings, they both evoke several *twin phenomena* which can be mutually suggestive[28]. In *The Child, the City and the Artist*, the Tree-Leaf statement followed a strong declaration against the direct analogy of tree and city. In fact, Van Eyck was opposed to the so-called *tree hierarchies*, commonly used within the Postwar urbanism of his time. Van Eyck could be referring to Candilis-Josic-Woods, an architectural firm that at the time was developing urban proposals and large buildings based on their *stem* concept. This concept was first introduced by Shadrach Woods in an article for *Architectural*

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[25] Van Eyck, Aldo. *The child, the city and the artist*. Edited by F. Strauven and V. Ligtelijn. Amsterdam: Sun Publishers, 2008, pp. 7-8.
[26] For instance, chapter 10, that dealt with the Dogon, was improved and published in the *Forum* magazine (July 1967) and later (1969) in Charles Jencks and George Baird's *Meaning in Architecture* (footnote 12). Chapter 9, focusing on the *Configurative Discipline*, was published in the *Forum* magazine (August 1962).
[27] Aldo van Eyck, *The child, the City and the Artist*, 100.
[28] Aldo van Eyck, *Collected articles and other writings*, 715.

Design published in 1960[29]. In Woods's article, the *stem* was presented as a rediscovery of the *linear city centre street* as the basic structure for a city plan. Their plans for the Caen Herouville, Fort Lamy (1961), clearly resemble a tree structure with a trunk (*stem*), branches and leaves (secondary streets and residential buildings)[30]. If we look into the projects by other members of Team 10, we might even think of Alison and Peter Smithson's diagrams for their Golden Lane proposal, presented as part of the *Urban Re-Identification Grid* at CIAM IX in Aix-en-Provence (1953), where the four functions of the Athens Charter (dwelling, work, recreation, transportation) were substituted by four scales of association (house-street-district-city), also somehow resembling a tree hierarchy, even if it was never presented in that way [Fig. 3].

However, in his stance against tree structures in *The Child, the City and the Artist*, Van Eyck was specially referring to Christopher Alexander, trained in both architecture and mathematics, who in the early 1960s began to develop a computer-aided design method that followed the tree analogy. In 1962, Alexander applied this method in his design for an agricultural village for six hundred people in India, which clearly displayed a tree structure, a hierarchical layout that was inherent to his approach of "a hierarchical nesting of sets between sets"[31]. On the suggestion of Balkrishna Doshi, Alexander had been invited to participate in the Team 10 meeting in Royaumont, where he presented this design project. In response, in his own talk[32], Van Eyck made a plea against tree structures in town planning. The resulting discussion never came to an agreement, although Alexander would later explicitly dismiss the use of tree structures himself[33] in favor of a more complex urban hierarchy he called *semi-lattice*, introduced in his essay *A City is not a Tree*[34] without any mention of his public fight with Van Eyck.

In this later essay, Alexander explains that both trees and semi-lattices are ways of thinking how a large group of small systems goes to make up a large and complex system, they are both names for structures of sets. While a tree is a very simple structure, where no overlapping occurs, semi-lattices are structures that contain overlapping units. Alexander thought that designers had been trying to conceive the city as a tree structure because the tree is accessible mentally and easy to deal with, but "the city is not, cannot and must not be a tree"[35], because it is a receptacle for life, and life overlaps. Indeed, Alexander was here repeating some of the ideas that Van Eyck had expressed at the Royaumont meeting and his Tree-Leaf statement. Van Eyck's response to Alexander's book, "On Christopher Alexander's A City is not a Tree", published in the hardback edition of Team 10 Primer, 1968, implied that his Tree-Leaf Statement indeed discussed the notion that a city is a semi-lattice, "without mathematics"[36] [Fig. 4]. One of the causes of this public discussion might have been that, when Alexander said "tree", he was naming an abstract structure[37], while Van Eyck was referring to the total and concrete reality of the tree, with its leaves, animals, slow growth and season change, hence his jotting: "without mathematics". Alexander firstly embraced and then dismissed the tree-city analogy in favor of the semi-lattice; while Van Eyck was always using a metaphor, more poetic and polysemic in nature.

Analogy versus Metaphor.

The most interesting part of Tree-Leaf Statement, at least for the study of architectural metaphors, is the way in which Van Eyck presented the "Tree-Leaf Statement" in both *The Child, the City and the Artist* and *The Situationist Times*[38], and why Van Eyck thought that direct analogies *would not work* when looking into the complex nature of both the city and the tree. "The object of the common Tree-City analogy is, of course, to suggest the organic relationship between the smallest part - via the intermediary stages each with

[29] Woods, Shadrach, Candilis, G. and A. Josic. "Stem" in *Architectural Design 1960*, no. 5, 181. London, 1960.
Also in "Urbanism", *Le Carré Bleu* no. 3. Helsinki, 1961.
[30] Max Risselada and Dirk van den Heuvel, *Team 10: In Search of a Utopia of the Present*, 96-97.
[31] The proposal for the village and its tree-like diagrams can be found in Appendix 1 of *Notes on the Synthesis of Form*. It should be noted that Alexander's approach is much more sophisticated than the direct formal translation of trunk-branches-leaves by Candilis-Josic-Woods.
Alexander, Christopher. *Notes on the Synthesis of Form*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1964.
[32] Excerpts from Alexander's presentation and Van Eyck's response can be read in Smithson, Alison (ed.). *Team 10 Meetings*. New York: Rizzoli, 1991, pp. 68-79. The full minutes of the meeting can be found in the Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam, where the Bakema Collection is held.
[33] The evolution of Christopher Alexander's urban ideas can be followed in Gabriel, Richard P. and Quillien, Jenny. "A Search for Beauty/A Struggle with Complexity: Christopher Alexander" *Urban Sci. 3*, no. 2, 2019: 64. https://doi.org/10.3390/urbansci3020064
[34] Alexander, Christopher. *A City is Not a Tree*. Portland: Sustasis Foundation, 2015.
[35] Christopher Alexander, *A City is Not a Tree*.
[36] Aldo van Eyck, *Collected articles and other writings*, 447.
Note that Van Eyck consistently made the error of using the word "precludes" to mean approximately "implicitly includes".
[37] "The tree of my title is not a green tree with leaves", he wrote in *A City is Not a Tree*
[38] Aldo van Eyck. "Beyond Visibility" in Jaqueline de Jong (ed.), *The Situationist Times* nº 4, October 1963: 79-85.

an increasing degree of complexity - and the whole," van Eyck argued[39]. But he thought that such an analytical and mechanically additive approach was inadequate. Firstly, because in his opinion the comparison between human artefacts and natural phenomena is misleading, and the direct analogy is altogether false as "it confounds both biology and architecture, both the relation house-city and the essence of a tree"[40]. While analogies and metaphors both show how two things are alike, analogies' ultimate goal is not only to show, but to make some short of explanatory claim, to communicate (in this case) that the City should be organised as a Tree. On the other hand, a metaphor is rhetorical, non-literal, it poetically says something *is* something else. By comparing the City to the House and both to the Tree and the Leaf, Van Eyck is inviting *us* to think about their similarities, about the nature of the city, the house, and the people in them. In short, analogies such as "a City is a Tree" compare things that have similar features in a formal and direct way, identifying an abstract organisational structure (the Tree) with a concrete and complex reality (the City), instead of identifying two different things indirectly through what one may call poetic association, like metaphors do.

According to van Eyck, "direct analogy leads nowhere, neither to the idea tree nor to the idea city" [41]. Van Eyck thought that a tree conceived as the sequence of Leaves-Twigs-Branches-Limbs-Trunk-Tree is no more a tree than a city conceived as the sequence Houses-Streets-Quarters-Center-City is a city. The tree-city analogy is a false organic analogy that is lifeless and false, because it overlooks the real meaning and the full reality of both leaf and tree, house and city, which transcend all the connotations of a purely mechanical and visual approach. A tree is not a compound of leaves, twigs, branches and trunk, but it is a *living* thing that is born and dies, that grows, changes through the seasons, that is full of birds, beasts and insects. Similarly, a city is not a perfect and hierarchical compound of houses, streets and neighborhoods but it is also chaotic, and necessarily so, just as van Eyck argued: "when we say city, we imply people"[42].

However, in the same text, Van Eyck explained that, if we would approach the four objects tree-leaf, house-city as forming a poetic image, that is, as a *double metaphor*, then they can help us understand the nature of both house and city, leaf and tree, their essential similarity and profound connotations. That's why Van Eyck replaced the Tree-City analogy with two separate and autonomous though inter-suggestive identifications: Leaf is Tree - Tree is Leaf, and House is City - City is House. Within Van Eyck's thinking, house is city because both house and city are places for human beings: the *In-between Realm* as man's home-realm[43]. In Van Eyck's opinion, the Tree-Leaf *metaphor* and not the tree-city *analogy* identifies what a tree represents visually with what it represents beyond that, its visual reality with its *life reality* (the tree grows from seed to maturity, is subject to birth and death, new trees ensue from it, there is seasonal transformation…). In a poetic manner, the Tree-Leaf metaphor therefore helps to identify *the city with its life reality*, that is, with the people that live in it. Within the *leaf* there is the *tree*, and within the *tree* there is the *leaf*; because *tree* and *leaf* both represent the same reality, part and whole should be present within each other. Thus, the same is true for *city* and *house*, because, after all, both part (*house*) and whole (*city*) are for the same human being and their "chaotic nature"[44]. That is what Van Eyck tried to convey with his poetic *Tree is Leaf, City is House* image: that a city is chaotic and necessarily so, or, as Shakespeare said of men, that cities are "of such stuff as dreams are made on"[45], that a city is not a city without its inhabitants and cannot be simplified or planned according to an oversimplified system of ascending dimension and ascending degree of complexity as the tree's. In fact, we think that the Tree-Leaf metaphor led the architect towards a very thorough exploration of all urban dimensions (the seasons, the growth and change, the natural elements, transmutability, place affinity, etc.) and its potential application to urban planning. [Fig. 5]

Van Eyck's double metaphor, in contrast with the Tree-city analogy, succeeded in identifying things of very different kinds, assisting in the understanding of very complex concepts such as Van Eyck's definition of the city but also his *Configurative Discipline*, a design method that Van Eyck had developed in the early 1960s to guarantee that in each part of the city there was an understanding of the whole, precisely what Van Eyck and Alexander were discussing during the 1962 Royaumont meeting. In short, with the Tree-Leaf

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[39] Aldo van Eyck, *The child, the City and the Artist*, 100.
[40] Aldo van Eyck, *The child, the City and the Artist*, 100.
[41] Aldo van Eyck, *The child, the City and the Artist*, 100.
[42] Aldo van Eyck, *Collected articles and other writings*, 447.
[43] One of the concepts that characterizes Van Eyck's thinking is the *In-Between*, that synthetizes his phenomenological approach. For Van Eyck, the *in-between* is not only an architectural device (the space between two other spaces), but a way to capture the nature of reality as it is interiorised by the mind. We are always in-between places and occasions, in our way to a different place, to the following moment, and that is what allows us to narratively experience the world.
[44] We are quoting Van Eyck. For him, chaotic is a positive quality. Aldo van Eyck, *Collected articles and other writings*, 447.
[45] Shakespeare quoted by Van Eyck in Aldo van Eyck, *Collected articles and other writings*, 447.

metaphor, Van Eyck tried to cast light on several profound concepts and ideas, to synthesize his life-long understanding of both house and city, space and time. The *Situationist Times*'s version of the Tree-Leaf statement, published in October 1963, is therefore preceded by a short text that Van Eyck later published again under the name of "There is a garden in her face."[46] In this he famously wrote: "Whatever space and time mean, **place and occasion mean more** …. Make of each a place, a bunch of places of each house and each city for a house is a tiny city, a city a huge house."[47] This was followed by an exploration of *twin phenomena*, *harmony in motion*, and specially *labyrinthian clarity*[48], the intriguing oxymoron which justified his participation in the *Labyrinth* issue and, according to Frampton[49], played an important role in Post-War discussions.

Indeed, the Tree-Leaf / House-City metaphor, although poetic and profoundly ambiguous, possesses a kind of clarity that never relinquishes the secret it guards, a *labyrinthian clarity* that, in Van Eyck's own words, "softens the edges of time and space and responds to regions <u>beyond visibility</u>."[50] meaning beyond visual analogy, a *labyrinthian clarity* that is kaleidoscopic and has the potential to house the complex reality of man and city. Ultimately, the Tree-Leaf metaphor succeeded where the Tree-City analogy failed, because it was not a question of the order a tree wrongly suggests, but a city and its inhabitants, a tree and its inhabitants: the birds, the beasts, the insects… because "space is the appreciation of it"[51], that was Van Eyck's motto.

The Child, the City and the Artist

Another characteristic of metaphors is that, while easy to understand when they work, they are very difficult to explain, due to their poetic and all-embracing nature. The Tree-Leaf statement is a rich poetic image, but also a complex and difficult one at that, a metaphor that needed a whole book to be explained. This is what *The Child, the City and the Artist* does, a book that, in ten chapters, thoroughly explores the house and the city, a collection of essays that constitute the most elaborate exposition of Van Eyck's ideological and architectural thinking. Van Eyck himself points out that this book is not a conclusive theory or design method, that its purpose is to evoke a mindset that "appeals to the imagination"[52]. It is easy to see this book as no more than a collection of highly evocative fragments, to think that it was built up piece by piece as an additive argument. Yet, the poetic density of each piece contains the whole story, complying with what Van Eyck stressed with the Tree-Leaf Statement and his *Configurative Discipline*,[53] namely that the whole should already be present in the part. Nevertheless, in order to explain why exactly a house is a city, and a city is a house, why tree is leaf and leaf is tree, why "space is the appreciation of it", Van Eyck needed to travel outside of architecture, *in-between* fields and cultures, to explore the new reality that, in his opinion, characterized 20th century thought. The result was an approach that he synthesized in the concept of *relativity*.

It is in no way the aim of this article to present the consequences of this approach to reality in its entirety, and Van Eyck himself needed a whole book to develop his concept. Francis Strauven has provided an insightful exploration of Aldo van Eyck's work and thinking, of his inspiration from physics, the humanities and art in *The Shape of Relativity*[54]. Indeed, in order to explore relativity and its impact in the classic relation between subject and object, Van Eyck used ideas from many different fields and authors, from Henri Bergson's philosophical concept of time in *Matière et mémoire*, to James Joyce's interior monologues in *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake*, from Einstein's *Theory of Relativity* or Bohr's and Heisenberg's atomic physics to *De Stijl* or Paul Klee's expressionism. In *The Child, the City and the Artist*, Van Eyck also quoted Dylan Thomas, T. S. Eliot, Pablo Picasso, Constantin Brancusi, Max Jacob, Paul Cézanne and Marcel Griaule and he even engaged in an anthropological analysis of the Dogon people's frame of mind and their collective cosmology[55]. *The Child, the City and the Artist* is a compelling dérive and a tribute to Van Eyck's involvement in the situationist

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46 Aldo van Eyck, *Collected articles and other writings*, 293-294.
47 Bold emphasis added by authors. Aldo van Eyck. "Beyond Visibility" in Jaqueline de Jong (ed.), *The Situationist Times* nº 4, October 1963: 79-85.
48 Aldo van Eyck, *Collected articles and other writings*, 472-473.
49 Chapter 4, Part Three of Frampton, Kennet. *Modern Architecture: a critical history*. London: Thames and Hudson, 2020.
50 Emphasis by authors. Aldo van Eyck. "Beyond Visibility" in Jaqueline de Jong (ed.), *The Situationist Times* nº 4, October 1963: 79-85.
51 Aldo van Eyck, *Collected articles and other writings*, 414.
52 First line of *The child, the City and the Artist*.
53 "Steps towards a *configurative discipline*" in Aldo van Eyck, *Collected articles and other writings*, 327-344.
54 Francis Strauven, *The Shapre of Relativity*.
55 The result was the beautiful last chapter of *The Child, the City and the Artist* that was later published in the book *Meaning in Architecture* by Charles Jencks and George Baird, with the title "A miracle of moderation".

movement[56], an incursion into the early 20th century thought *in-between* philosophy, poetry, science, art and anthropology. That much was needed to explain Van Eyck's poetic metaphors. It is a book that can be read time and again to always find something new since, according to Van Eyck, "to discover anew implies discovering something new"[57]. Arguably, the surprising fact about his elaborations is that Van Eyck does not tell us how to apply his ideas to architecture. Similarly to how Robert Venturi, in *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* (1966), included several of his architectural projects at the end of the book as examples for the implementation of his thoughts, the closest thing to an architectural synthesis of the new reality in *The Child, the City and the Artist* is a set of projects by Van Eyck's colleagues, students and friends[58].

The *Configurative Discipline*: Noah's Ark by Piet Blom

The Tree-Leaf metaphor was never transformed into built form, but not for the lack of trying. During the early 1960s, Van Eyck developed what he described as the *Configurative Discipline*, an attempt to overcome CIAM's Functional City and the Athens Charter, which Post-War architects saw as oversimplifications that, simply, did not work[59]. The *Configurative Discipline* was an attempt to solve the then-called problem of the great number, a nod to the construction of large housing projects to accommodate the multitudes that historically had been living in self-built homes. Team 10's pronounced interest in the development of a new urban planning strategy addressing both the growth and change of cities and human's need for identity and belongingness, should be framed within the heated debate that was taking place during the last three CIAM congresses (Aix-en-Provence 1953, Dubrovnic 1956 and Otterlo 1959). Van Eyck's *Configurative Discipline*, as mentioned earlier, was an attempt to create a design method in which part and whole are conceived in relation with each other, which brings forth a single pattern or set of patterns able to create an environment that makes a citizen feel at home regardless of where exactly they are.

A thorough exploration of the Configurative Discipline was conducted by Luis Palacios Labrador[60], who links Van Eyck's first texts and ideas to Piet Blom's and Herman Hertzberger's work. Yet, while they predominantly designed either detached or small groups of buildings, the *Configurative Discipline* was aimed at a bigger scale of urban planning. It could actually be argued that the *Configurative Discipline* was not ever applied to big scale projects (to the City), misunderstood by Van Eyck's colleagues at Team 10. This last fact manifested in an infamous discussion at the 1962 Team 10 meeting in Royaumont which had a considerable impact on Van Eyck's career and remains to be revisited and discussed in more depth by architectural historians[61].

The origin of this discussion was precisely the Tree-Leaf diagram, that is, Van Eyck's stance against the use of tree structures in post-war urbanism (Christopher Alexander, Georges Candilis and Sadrach Woods were present at the discussion). It was the first time that Van Eyck had presented his double metaphor in public, and it arose many responses by Alexander and Woods[62]. However, the actual conflicting part was a project by Piet Blom which was presented by his teacher, Aldo van Eyck, as an example of the *Configurative Discipline*, a design called *Noah's Ark* (1962) that beautifully captured the complex meaning of the tree is leaf/city is house metaphor. Van Eyck's approach to urban planning supported the development of an urban fabric in which the built and its counter form, the exterior space, were given the same value. He did not use terms such as *mats*, later used by Alison Smithson for the concept

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[56] Since the late forties, Van Eyck was very close to the CoBrA Group, for whom he designed two exhibitions in Amsterdam (1949) and Liege (1951). It was through their members that he got acquainted with Asger Jorn or Jacqueline de Jong, important artist within the Situationist movement.
[57] Aldo van Eyck, *The child, the City and the Artist*, 130.
[58] Including Van Eyck's own Amsterdam Orphanage (1959). In their edition of the book, Strauven and Ligtelijn gathered all these projects in a chapter with the title "Some starting points and Steps towards a *Configurative Discipline*".
[59] For instance, the Smithsons (colleagues of Aldo van Eyck within Team 10) strongly critised the New Towns that were built during the 40s and 50s in Great Britain in an attempt to materialize the Athens Charter's functional division.
[60] Palacios Labrados, Luis. 'Hacia Un Método de Configuración'. Doctoral thesis, Universidad Politécnica de Madrid, 2017.
[61] Francis Strauven has compared the full transcript of the Royaumont 1962 Team 10 meeting (that can be found at the Het Nieuwe Instituut in Rotterdam) with the narration of the events that Alison put forward in *Team 10 Meetings* (Smithson, Alison. *Team Ten Meetings, 1953-1981*. United States: Rizzoli International Publications, 1991). He has discovered that every positive reaction to Van Eyck's presentation was completely erased, building the idea that everyone was against Piet Blom's scheme. It has not been sufficiently acknowledged that they were Allison and Peter Smithson themselves who gathered and published Team 10's chronicles, devising a certain approach to the group's origins, members or contributions to postwar architectural discourse. In a sense, as architects personally involved in the events, they were simultaneously writing and developing their own biographies, as if they were external observers. Scholars have pointed out many inconsistencies between the Smithsons' narration of events and what can be concluded from the original documents and minutes of the meetings. Collective stories, when told by single members, are in danger of becoming black-boxed autobiographies.
[62] The full minutes of the meeting can be found in the Het Nieuwe Instituut, Rotterdam, where the Bakema Collection is held.

of *mat-building*, a term coined by the Smithsons in the late 1974[63] to describe the new architecture that had arisen within Team 10: large-scale, high-density structures organised on the basis of an accurately modulated grid.

With Blom's design and in 1962, Van Eyck was already suggesting a complex structure of interwoven patterns that would simultaneously determine both the large and the small scales of the city. In Piet Blom's scheme the system for the arrangement of streets, patios, gardens and squares resulted in a surprising urban configuration[64]. The superposition of different patterns defined a urban tissue with five levels of association (house, cluster, quarter, neighbourhood and district), thus standing in contradistinction with CIAM's four urban functions. Its main characteristic was that the same pattern formed both the different parts of the city and the city as a whole. Part and whole were created with the same basic laws or, in Alexander's terms, it was not a tree, but a semi-lattice. [Fig. 6]

According to Van Eyck's, "Blom had succeeded in simultaneously, not additively, composing all the feelings and emotions that form a city, all small and big sizes, into one thing that's both small and large"[65]. Amancio Gueddes, Kisho Kurokawa, Guillermo Jullian de la Fuente, and Stefan Wewerka all praised Blom's design, even Bakema initially had a positive reaction. But John Voelcker, Shadrach Woods and specially the Smithsons thought very differently. They criticised Blom's scheme for what they saw as an extreme geometric determinism, a too literal translation of the House-City metaphor. Peter Smithson thought that it was the exact opposite of what Team 10 was looking for, and Alison Smithson even went so far as to call the project completely dogmatic and German, "completely fascist"[66]. Francis Strauven speculates that the Smithsons might not have understood that the geometry of the project was an underlying pattern which could be altered, and that Blom had only detailed a small part of his proposal as an example of what could be built within this pattern.

In an unexpected turn of events, in the autumn of 1964 Blom was invited by Jullian de la Fuente to visit Le Corbusier's studio and explain Noah's Ark and other projects. Le Corbusier and de la Fuente were at the time developing the Venice Hospital (1965), and greatly appreciated Blom's work. In fact, Noah's Ark, although more articulated, was not very far from what would later become known as *mat-building*[67]. Indeed, after the Royaumont meeting, Candilis and Woods, as well as the Smithsons, started using mat-like structures that could resemble this never-ending pattern by Blom, and praised Le Corbusier's Venice Hospital as soon as it was published.

> "I'm a bit disappointed, honestly, that what to me is a configuration of liberty, which I find in its kaleidoscopic quality, you people seem to see as a geometric pattern. I very much enjoy Blom's concept of liberty and I find it extremely inspiring that there is somebody who in the heart is so free - free because he's so disciplined - that his form of freedom should be labelled fascism"[68]

> "The plans I showed were made to clarify the very things you attacked like twin Quixotes! (The mill wasn't even there, so you didn't even break your spears, nor the mill!) The victory was yours all through but nothing was defeated"[69]

> "The Smithsons, believe it or not, detected fascism in a snowflake at the Royaumont meeting in 1962, but still fail to consider the damage that faulty verdict - spitefully published - has done. […] What even the Smithsons themselves do not deserve should never have been spilt by them on Blom who least deserves it"[70]

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[63] Alison Smithson, "How to Recognize and Read Mat-Building; Mainstream Architecture as It Has Developed Towards the Mat-Building", *Architectural Design* n. 9. September, 1974, pp. 573-90.

[64] Palacios Labrados, Luis. "Noah's Ark: the art of humanising the greater number" in *Proyecto, Progreso, Arquitectura* n° 10, 2014.

[65] From the transcript of the Royaumont meeting (1962), in Aldo van Eyck, *Collected articles and other writings*, pp. 425-439.

[66] From the transcript of the Royaumont meeting (1962), in Aldo van Eyck, *Collected articles and other writings*, pp. 425-439.

[67] Of course, there are many differences. Blom's scheme was not as flexible and ever-changing as Candilis-Josic-Woods and the Smithsons' mat-buildings. Dirk van den Heuvel and Max Risselada have labeled this discussion between the British and Dutch members of Team 10 as the dilemma "between understatement and overdesign". See Risselada, Max, and Dirk van den Heuvel. *Team 10: In Search of a Utopia of the Present 1953-1981*. Netherlands: NAI Publishers, 2006.

[68] From the transcript of the Royaumont meeting (1962), in Aldo van Eyck, *Collected articles and other writings*, pp. 425-439.

[69] From a letter to the Smithsons after the Royaumont meeting (1962), in Aldo van Eyck, *Collected articles and other writings*, 440-41.

[70] Extract from "Fascism in a snowflake" (1986), in Aldo van Eyck, *Collected articles and other writings*, 463.

Surprising that the most innocent poetic image provoked such discussion and accusations, an enormous shift in Van Eyck's career, who will, after that, apply himself mainly to the intrinsic quality of architectural space, abandoning city scale projects and the *Configurative Discipline*. Such is, we want to propose here, the power and danger of metaphors, poetic images that grow in-between fields (philosophy, literature, art or anthropology), and might die amidst our closest friends. But the dead can always rise anew.